

# FRENCH INDOCHINA

When by themselves they are inclined to dreamy melancholy, and this sentimentality dominates even the caustic vein in certain popular songs. Musk is handed down by oral tradition. The method of notation is imperfect, and the air may be embroidered *ad infinitum*—just as the time and words are left to the singers<sup>1</sup> and orchestras' good pleasure. The few musical rules that exist, as well as the official Department of Music, the Ministry of Rites, are copied from the Chinese. But the Annamite songs themselves are a spontaneous outburst, beloved of the people. They claim that so great is their power that not only do songs soothe the savage breast, but they can make peace to reign even among mandarins. Annamite music is subordinated to the singers, usually who are required to have beauty and a colossal memory, as well as a voice trained through a long and painful apprenticeship. We find that parents dedicate their daughters to such a life for which music may be highly appreciated on its artistic merits, if only to escape the thought: to be addicted to immorality, from whom the mandarins would expect all respectable men to flee. The gestures and discreet movements that accompany these long\* monotonous, and unintelligible airs are as minutely regulated as the singer's conduct and costuming. The singers and orchestras serve as entertainers at the rich men's feasts, while those of inferior ability wander from village to village as street musicians. It is in the theatre, even more than in song, that most of the drama percolates into popular consciousness. The drama is the poorest that can be afforded. Every important town, as Hanoi, has its regular theatre. Travelling troupes are constantly playing at the communal house

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